

from Mississippi College School of Law. Additional theological studies included scholarship through Jerusalem, Israel; the Biblical Archeological Society at Oxford University; Keble College and St. Edmund Hall; and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Once he completed his studies in law, he became part of the third-largest law firm in Mississippi. He would go on to found his own law firm in 1977 in Gulfport, Mississippi: Hopkins, Barvié & Hopkins. He later devoted 13 years of his life as chief judge of the Court of Military Appeals. Additionally, to his own law firm, Al was president of ANH Enterprises and Muddy River Farms.

Al enlisted in military service in 1965, joining the 31st Infantry Division. As part of his military career, he graduated from the Judge Advocate General's School in Charlottesville, Virginia, serving as a Staff Judge Advocate for the Mississippi Army National Guard for over two decades. In his final four years of military service, he was the Assistant Adjutant General of the State of Mississippi. He retired as a Major General in 1996, having earned many awards, including the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the MS Magnolia Cross, the MS Magnolia Medal, the MS War Medal, the MS Emergency Service Medal, and the MS Longevity Medal. He was also a Mississippi National Guard Foundation Life Member.

More recently, Al was known for his work with the Mississippi Gaming Commission. He had been reappointed for a third term, which would have lasted until 2025. He had served as both a commissioner and chairman, beginning his service as chairman in 2015.

Al gave to others through the gift of time, being a mentor to many Mississippians. He also gave of his time through being a Sunday school teacher, a man of prayer, and a deacon at First Baptist Church in Gulfport.

Al is preceded in death by his father, Lloyd Carter Hopkins; his mother, Reba Norris Hopkins; his brother, Lloyd Gerald Hopkins; and his daughter, Ashley Anne. He is survived by his wife, Johna Ruth Hopkins, who is from Walnut, Mississippi; their son, Norris Hopkins (Jodie); his grandson, Carter Houston Hopkins; his sister, Lana Moss (Harvey); and his nieces and nephews.

HONORING THE WINNERS OF THE 2022-2023 BROWNSVILLE ISD SPELLING BEE

HON. VICENTE GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 17, 2023

Mr. VICENTE GONZALEZ of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the winners of the 2022-2023 Brownsville ISD Spelling Bee, with special recognition to Nicholas Torres, who took home the first-place prize.

For those who may not be as familiar with the South Texas region, the Brownsville Independent School District (ISD) is the largest employer in the entire Rio Grande Valley. With an enrollment of more than 40,000 thousand students with a 95.4 percent graduation rate,

Brownsville ISD is thriving thanks to its dedicated faculty and staff.

The brisk February air was not enough to deter the more than 40 contestants who took part in the Brownsville ISO Spelling Bee, as well as the parents, family, friends, and alternates who joined them in the morning of February 4, 2023. More than 30 elementary schools and 10 middle schools were represented in the Spelling Bee, which has been held annually for more than 50 years. Additionally, each contestant was already a winner before the contest even started; every campus has an individual spelling bee, and the winners all competed in this event.

With the spelling bee lasting more than an hour and a half, each contestant made all of South Texas proud. Aime Garcia, from Putegnag Elementary, finished 5th. Javier Ramirez, of Hudson Elementary, finished 4th. Alexandra Garcia, of Manzano Middle School, finished 3rd. And Jack Kocaya, of Stell Middle School, finished second.

For the final two words, Nicholas Torres did not need the definition, part of speech, or for the judge to use the words in a sentence. After lawlessly spelling both bumptious, (self-assertive or proud to an irritating degree) and subsequent (coming after something in time; following) Nicholas Torres, of Egly Elementary, became the 2023 Brownsville ISD Spelling Bee champion.

Mr. Speaker, Nicholas Torres, the rest of the spelling bee champions, and all the educators involved in this year's spelling bee represent the best and brightest in our education system. I cannot wait to see what Nicholas and these bright young scholars accomplish in their future, and I am thankful for all the educators and parents who have given up so much to get them there.

HONORING JENNIFER PAUL AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 17, 2023

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, Jennifer Paul is a lifelong resident of Osceola County. Jennifer is a warrior for bringing awareness to Black history matters in Osceola County and for her involvement in the Whitted Historic Community. In addition to serving in her community, Jennifer has over 15 years of experience in the Department of Defense manufacturing industry, where she currently works full-time.

Jennifer received the Osceola County Women Warrior award in 2022 for publicly sharing Black history from Osceola County of different lifelong icons who have served their community and community pillars. Also, for opening up opportunities for future generations.

Jennifer is a member of the NAACP of Osceola County 5121, serves as the chairperson for the environmental committee, and was recently elected to serve on the at-large executive committee for the local NAACP.

Environmental concerns within her community are another area to be enhanced through community involvement. She continues to advocate for inclusion in her community and equality for environmental injustices.

Bridging the gap between the community and local government is a priority for Jennifer. She also shares this same passion with her twin sister, Jessica, and they have partnered to provide the proper resources to the community.

Jennifer is the second of three children including her brother Justin and a mother to two beautiful daughters, Princess and Precious. Her supportive significant other supports all of her accomplishments. She is very proud of her parents, Larry Paul and Karen Starke-Paul, for instilling great values and work ethics in all of their children's successful lives.

She will continue to build a better community for the residents in the heart of the Whitted Historic Community.

On behalf of Jennifer, she would like to thank those who were involved in nominating her.

CELEBRATING THE CAREER OF TONY DEPRIMA

HON. LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 17, 2023

Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the career of Anthony DePrima, who is retiring from his position as Energize Delaware's Executive Director on March 17th.

Tony moved to the First State in the 1990's to work for the city government of Dover, the capital of my home state of Delaware. He rose from planning director to city manager, and always kept a special focus on green energy. Tony has been instrumental in bringing renewable energy and environmentally friendly energy production to our state.

Energize Delaware knew that Tony was the perfect choice as their first Executive Director when they brought him on board in 2011. Since then, he has overseen the nonprofit's expansion into several sectors and has had a constant passion for helping all Delawareans live more energy efficient lives. Tony was recently recognized for his work by the Delaware Business Times as Medium Nonprofit CEO of the Year in 2022.

Along with his work with Energize Delaware, Tony is the vice president of the Capital School District Board of Education, the board treasurer of NeighborGood Partners, the board treasurer of Kent County Conservancy, the past president of the Dover Library Foundation, and a member of the Capital City Rotary in Dover. Among it all, he found the time to earn a Ph.D. in Urban Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Delaware in 2018.

Tony DePrima's commitment to serving his community and the state of Delaware is nothing short of admirable. I am proud to salute him for his work and wish him all the best in retirement.

HONORING THE CAREER AND SERVICE OF LINDA VAIL

HON. ELISSA SLOTKIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 17, 2023

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the career of a consummate public

servant tirelessly devoted to improving the health and safety of the community. For the past decade, Linda Vail has served as Health Officer for Ingham County, overseeing more than 400 employees, an annual budget of more than \$50 million, and a network of health centers. And she's done so by always keeping science and justice at the forefront, with a no-nonsense, analytical approach. This, even as she faced extreme challenges brought on by a global pandemic, social upheaval, and the politicization of the field she so loves.

But it all began with a girl and a chemistry kit. Growing up in suburban Atlanta, a young Linda Vail was fortunate to have parents who nurtured her love of science. After excelling in all scientific endeavors in high school, Vail went on to earn a bachelor's degree in microbiology from the University of Georgia. Four years later, she arrived in Kalamazoo, Michigan as a researcher for pharmaceutical giant Upjohn. In 1996, she earned a Master's degree in public health administration at Western Michigan University, which led to her first public service position in emergency preparedness at Kalamazoo County's Health Department. She was soon promoted to deputy health officer, and then in 2006 to the role of health officer.

Her disaster preparation skills and studies were quickly put to the test when, in 2010, a pipeline rupture on the Kalamazoo River resulted in one of the largest inland oil spills in U.S. history. It was the efforts and advocacy of Linda and her team that kept that toxic sludge from reaching Lake Michigan, mixing with superfund sites, and multiplying the disaster into an all-out ecological and health catastrophe.

She joined the Ingham County Health Department shortly after, and became Health Officer in 2014. Under her tenure, Vail has brought a holistic, equity-based approach to the role and to the community. From greenlighting clean syringe exchange programs, to securing federal funds for gun violence prevention groups, and advocating for a declaration of racism as a public health crisis, Linda has constantly sought to amplify and expand the definition of what it means for a community to be healthy.

I came to know Linda as she skillfully led the county's response to the COVID-19 pan-

demic. She was the clear, concise, voice that calmly cut through the chaos, and I am so grateful for the way she always made herself available to me and my team. In early 2021, I joined her alongside volunteers to support a drive through vaccination clinic at Michigan State University, an experience I will never forget, and one made possible by her professionalism and advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Linda Vail's exemplary leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic saved countless lives in mid-Michigan, but it was not without a toll on her own. As she now steps back from the pressures of public health in an effort to focus on her own well-being, I salute her extraordinary devotion to reducing disparities, eliminating inequities, and creating a healthier, more just community for all. I wish her all the best in retirement and offer my gratitude for her long and fruitful career, and for her service above self.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF NORWICH NEW YORK FIREFIGHTER ZACHARY MINER

HON. MARCUS J. MOLINARO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 17, 2023

Mr. MOLINARO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the career of Norwich firefighter Zachary Miner, who recently retired from the Norwich Fire Department after 20 years of dedicated service. Throughout his career, Zach has demonstrated a strong commitment to public service by ensuring the safety of his community.

Zach joined the Norwich Fire Department in December of 2002 and received his EMT certification two years later. Since his certification, he has treated thousands of patients and become a role model and teacher for others in his department.

In 2014, Zach was honored with the Firefighter of the Year Award and American Red Cross "Real Hero's Award" after heroically rescuing an adult trapped in a garage fire. His contributions and service to the Norwich community will not be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues in the House join me in recognizing the career of

Norwich Firefighter Zachary Miner, a hard-working and dedicated public servant with an unwavering commitment to keeping Upstate New Yorkers safe.

HONORING MERCHON GREEN AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 17, 2023

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, Merchon Green is a graduate of Florida State University where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Management Information Systems and a minor in communications. She also earned a Juris Doctorate in Law from Southern University Law Center.

Merchon is the founder of MDG Advisory Group, a full-service consulting firm, and Pioneering Change, Inc., a community advocacy organization dedicated to equity and equality. Merchon founded Pioneering Change, Inc. in March of 2017 after a series of murders in the Gifford community. Pioneering Change, Inc. works to unify citizens, educate them to increase self-sufficiency, and equip them with strategies to advocate for themselves, as well as employ ways to better their communities.

Merchon has served on numerous committees advocating for equity, equality, and representation for the underserved. From 2018 to 2020, Merchon served as the chairperson for the School District of Indian River County's Federal Court Mandated Equity Committee, where she oversaw the district's compliance with the 1967 Desegregation Order, as well as made policy, program, and service recommendations to remedy inequities in the School District of Indian River County.

Today, she is the City of Orlando's first equity official and is working to ensure that all residents feel equally valued, equally protected, and have equitable access to opportunities in the City Beautiful.